

## DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 272 214

IR 051 588

AUTHOR Ettelt, Harold  
TITLE What Price Weeding II.  
PUB DATE 86  
NOTE 18p.  
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)  
  
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.  
DESCRIPTORS \*Community Colleges; \*Library Circulation; Library Collection Development; \*Library Collections; Library Planning; Library Research; Two Year Colleges  
IDENTIFIERS \*Weeding (Library)

## ABSTRACT

In the summer of 1984, seven Library of Congress subclasses in the Columbia-Greene Community College Library were surveyed to determine if past circulation records could reliably predict future circulation. In the summer of 1985, a follow-up study surveyed 10 Library of Congress subclasses to verify the results of the first study. The second study, described in this report, included 3,391 "old" books (acquired in 1976 or earlier) and 1,009 "new" books (acquired in 1977 or 1978). The sample was approximately 10% of the collection. The study confirmed the findings of the first study: the likelihood of books being used does not progressively decline with additional years of non-use. Also reaffirmed is the finding that, while first use could not be reliably predicted, prior non-use can be useful as a predictor for future use, and therefore, as a criterion for weeding. Thirty-two charts accompany this report. (THC)

\*\*\*\*\*  
\* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made \*  
\* from the original document. \*  
\*\*\*\*\*

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
Office of Educational Research and Improvement  
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION  
CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as  
received from the person or organization  
originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve  
reproduction quality.

Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-  
ment do not necessarily represent official  
OERI position or policy.

ED272214

WHAT PRICE WEEDING II

by Harold Ettelt, Chair  
Dept. of Library Services  
Columbia-Greene Community College  
Hudson, NY

Note:

Columbia-Greene CC is a small (1200 FTE students)  
community college in rural New York State. There  
are approximately 38,000 circulating books as of  
mid-1986 and circulation counted as books actually  
checked out of the library bounces around 20,000  
per year. When books are returned they receive a  
use stamp. Thus renewals are not represented in  
this study, nor is it complicated by reserve use.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS  
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Harold Ettelt

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES  
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

IR051588

## WHAT PRICE WEEDING II

In the summer of 1984 I conducted a weeding study (Community and Junior College Libraries, Vol. 3, no. 3, Spring 1985). I then surveyed seven Library of Congress subclasses in our collection to determine if there was any way that past circulation records of given books could reliably predict future circulation. Did it make sense to use a book's circulation record to help determine whether or not to weed the book?

My findings contained at least one surprise and, given the importance of the problem, left me with a strong desire to check up on myself through another study. I therefore rearranged the parameters a bit and did a second study in the summer of 1985.

The original study had surveyed seven LC subclasses. This study covers ten, only one of which is a partial repeat. If the first study results could be universally applied, the results of the second study should be similar to the first. If they were not I had nothing. They were.

The first study covered 2295 books acquired prior to January 1, 1977 when we first began keeping a permanent circulation record in each book. The present study includes 3,391 of these "old" 1976 and earlier acquisitions, and adds 1009 "new" books that were acquired in 1977 or 1978. The "new" books were added simply to measure use over the entire shelf life of the book. In all, the sample is roughly ten percent of the entire collection.

The LC subclasses chosen represent a very broad sample of the collection. They include:

|                 |                                |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| BF 121-1411     | Psychology                     |
| E 159-475       | American history               |
| G 512 - GV 1065 | Anthropology, folklore, sports |
| H - HD 9052     | Economics                      |
| N 51 - ND 217   | Art                            |
| PR 2987-6027    | English literature             |
| PZ 3A - PZ 3W   | Fiction in English             |
| QH 104 - QL 60  | Biology                        |
| S 417 - SB 418  | Agriculture                    |
| T - TP 807      | Technology                     |

The number of books in the "H" sample was 900 and in the "S" sample was 300. All the others included 400 books each.

The surprise in the first study, alluded to earlier, was that the likelihood of books being used does not progressively decline with additional years of non-use. That flew in the face of "what I knew", or perhaps of what I wanted to know. In the second study I therefore looked very carefully at this finding and found a partial reconciliation between "what I knew", and what the data showed to be true.

As the composite charts for all classes show (#1 and #2 below), "what I knew" is true if we take the entire collection as an aggregate. For "new" books there is a rather steep decline in the likelihood of first use over time. For "old" books the decline is less marked, and seems to level off, but is still evident.

Unfortunately, one does not weed some average of the entire collection. When we get down to the level of the average of individual pieces of the collection (charts 3-12 below), we find that the likelihood no longer reliably declines. That this is possibly true only because of the smaller number of books does not matter. These samples are 100% of the pertinent books in each subclass and therefore all that a weeder would have to work with. It is therefore not an artifact of sample size, but of the actual collection. An analog would be an attempt to predict the number of "A" grades in a class of 30 students based on the average number given by the entire college. It won't work.

Another finding of the first study was that, while first use could not be reliably predicted, weeding previously unused books would cost fewer circulations. This the present study reaffirms. Whether we look at "new" books or "old", and whether we consider recent single circulations or recent multiple circulations, prior non-use can be useful as a predictor. As charts 13-32 show, previously used books will circulate more often by a wide margin, whether we look at the individual subclasses, or their aggregate. The only anomaly here is the "N" subclass which is used so heavily that weeding it at all would be folly. And even with the "N" subclass, the circulation per book favors those previously used.

Conclusion

As I pointed out in the earlier study, there is no free lunch. Weeding will cost, as will not weeding. The combined studies simply lay out some of the costs and indicate how they may be kept to a minimum. They will not disappear.

Given the choice, I would not weed at all. Forced to weed, or when the cost of not doing so got too high (lost seating, crowded stacks, great shifting needed, etc.), I will weed. And when I weed I will use these studies as a guide, wishing the while that I had something more reliable, but consoled by having one at all.

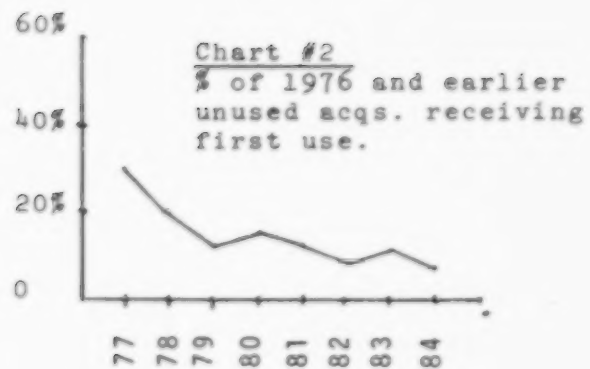
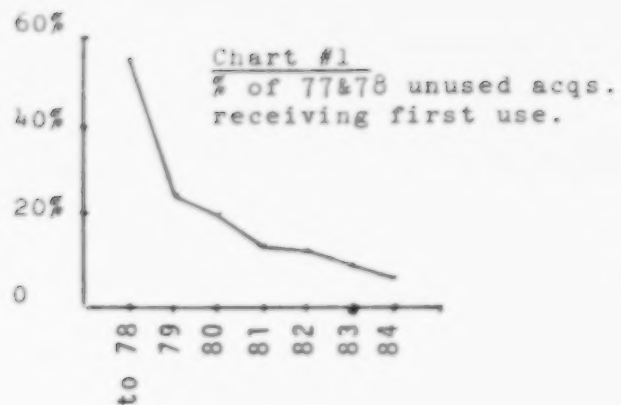


Chart # 3

BF 121-1411  
% of unused receiving  
first use.

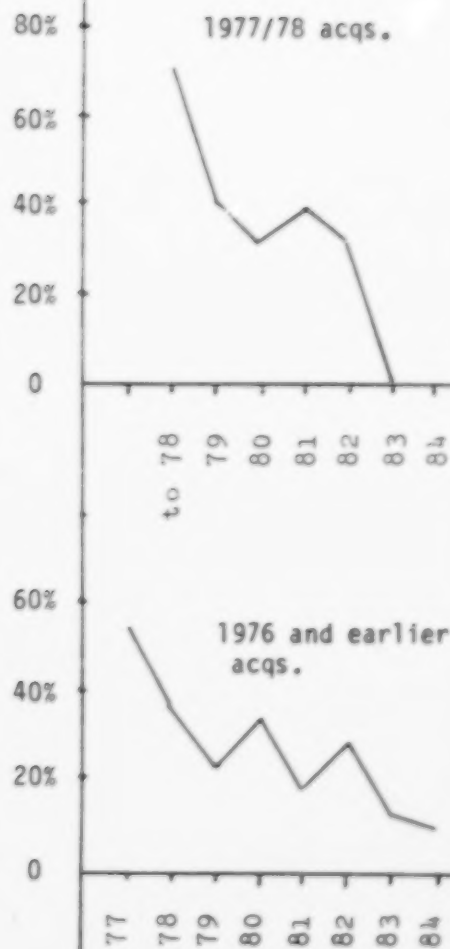


Chart # 4

E 159-475  
% of unused receiving  
first use.

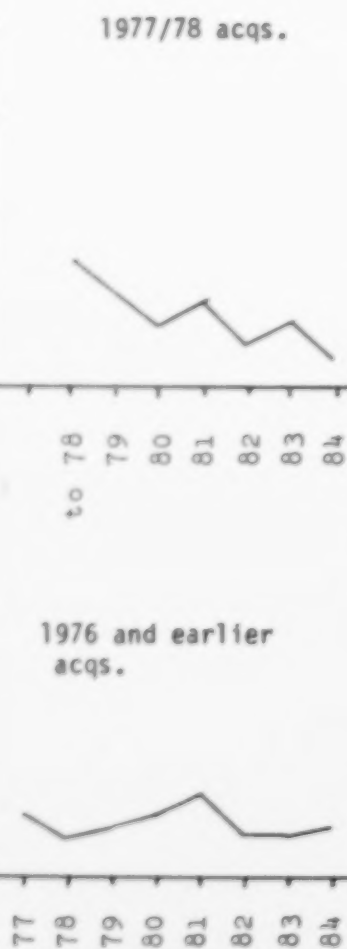


Chart # 5

G 512-GV 1065  
% of unused receiving  
first use.

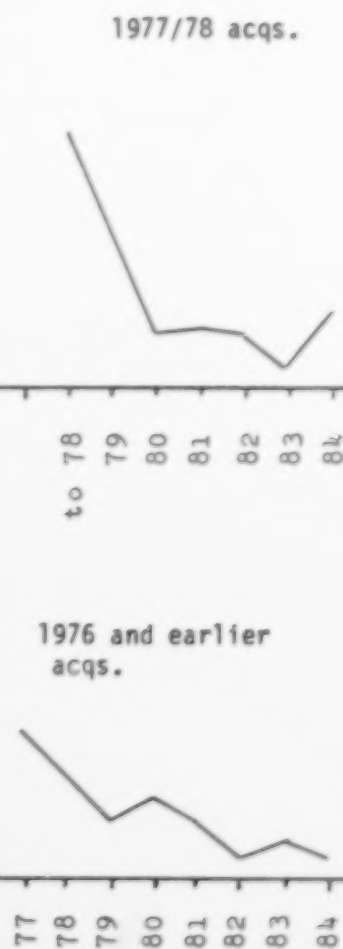


Chart # 6

H-HD 9502  
% of unused receiving  
first use.

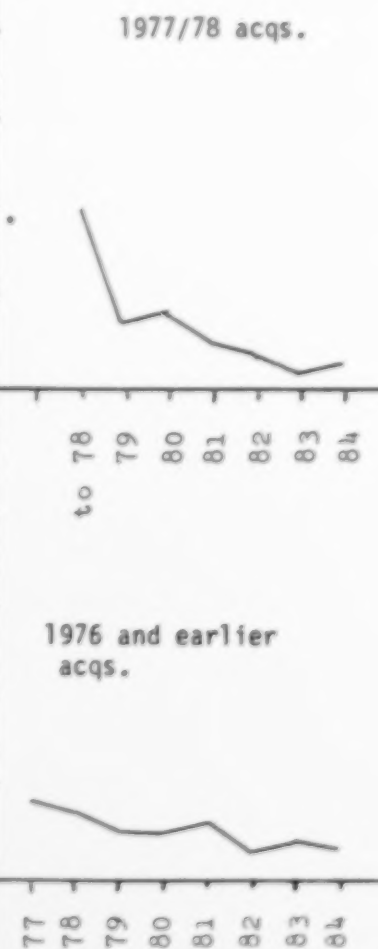


Chart # 7

N 51-ND 217  
% of unused receiving  
first use.

1977/78 acqs.

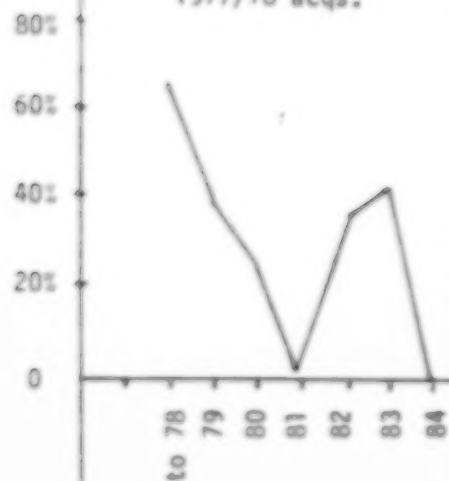


Chart # 8

PR 2987-6027  
% of unused receiving  
first use.

1977/78 acqs.



Chart # 9

PZ 3A-PZ 3W  
% of unused receiving  
first use.

1977/78 acqs.

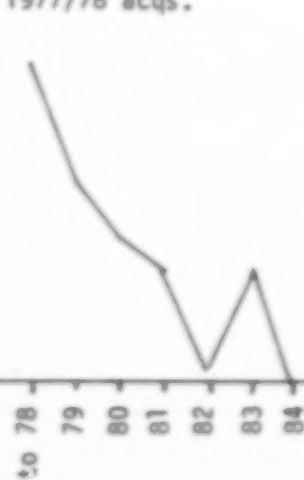


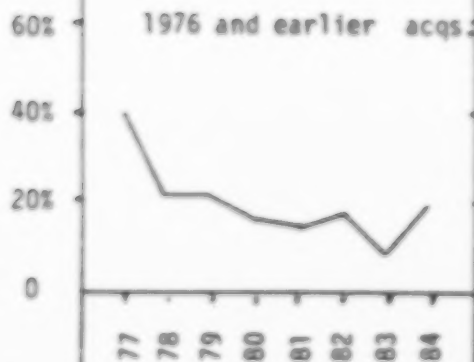
Chart # 10

QH 104-QL 60  
% of unused receiving  
first use.

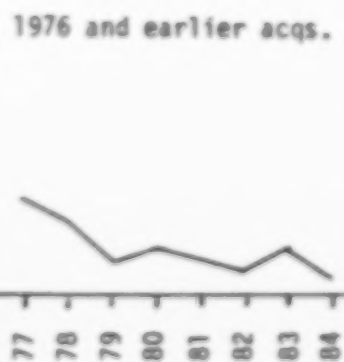
1977/78 acqs.



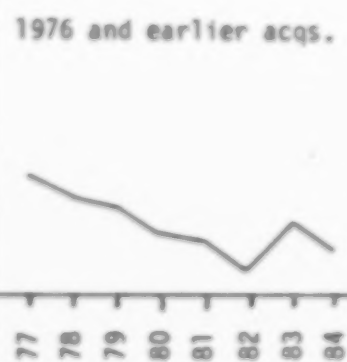
1976 and earlier acqs.



1976 and earlier acqs.



1976 and earlier acqs.



1976 and earlier acqs.

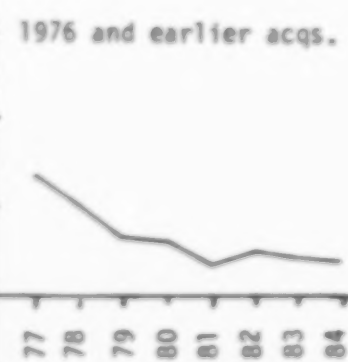


Chart # 11

S 417-SB 418  
% of unused receiving  
first use.

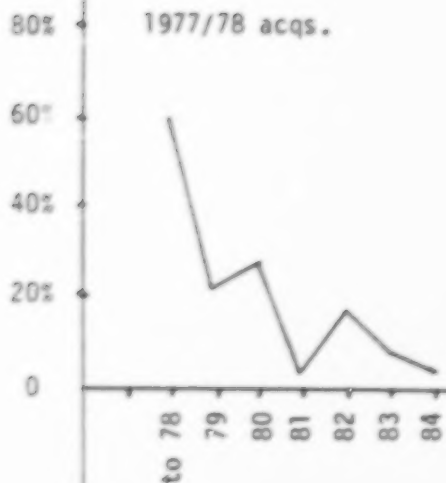


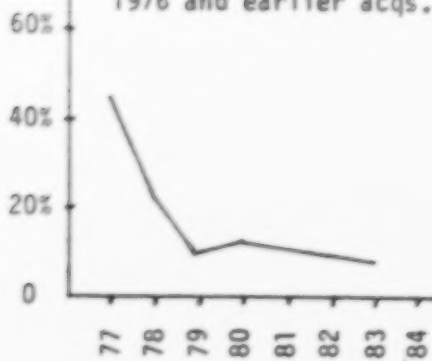
Chart # 12

T-TP 807  
% of unused receiving  
first use.

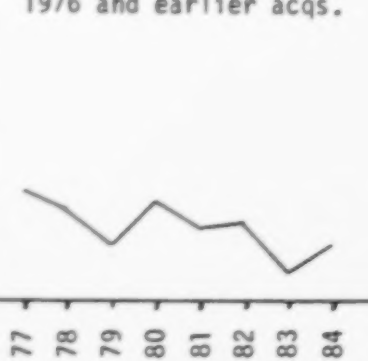
1977/78 acqs.



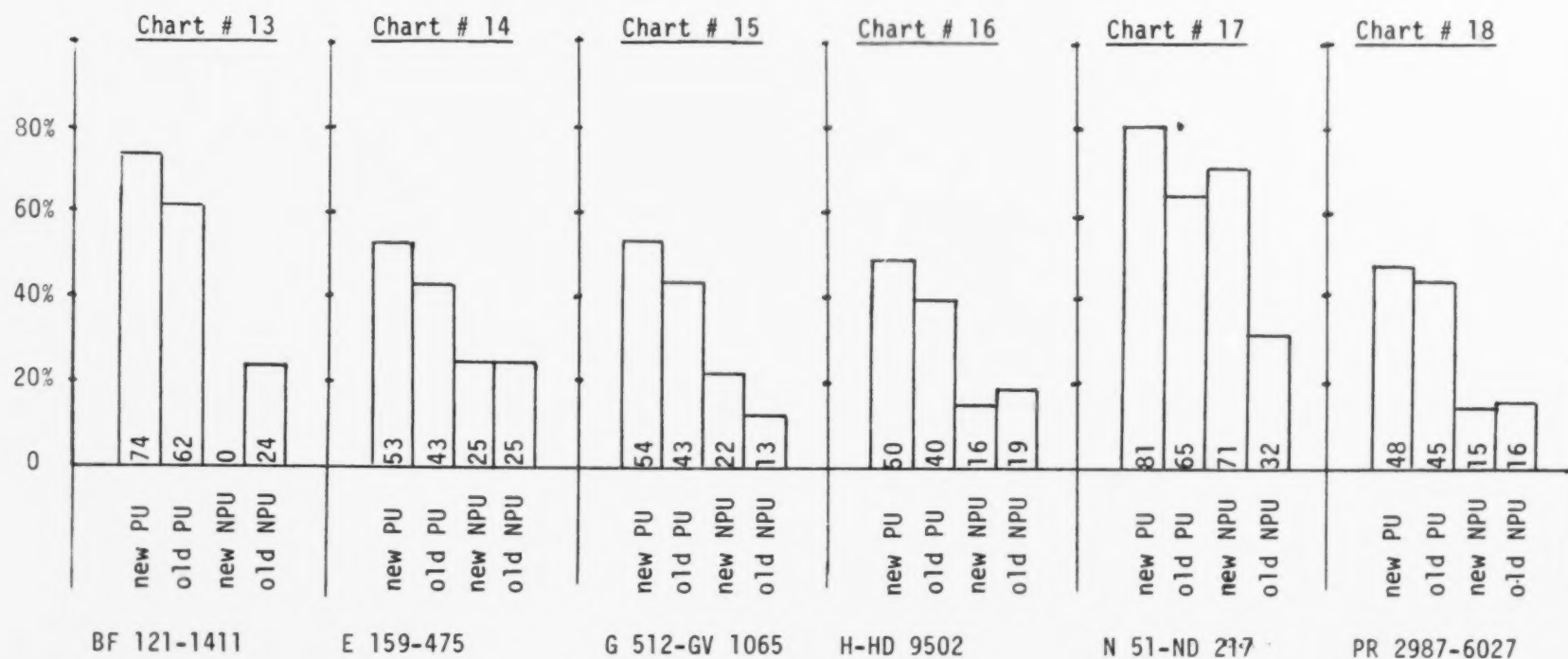
1976 and earlier acqs.



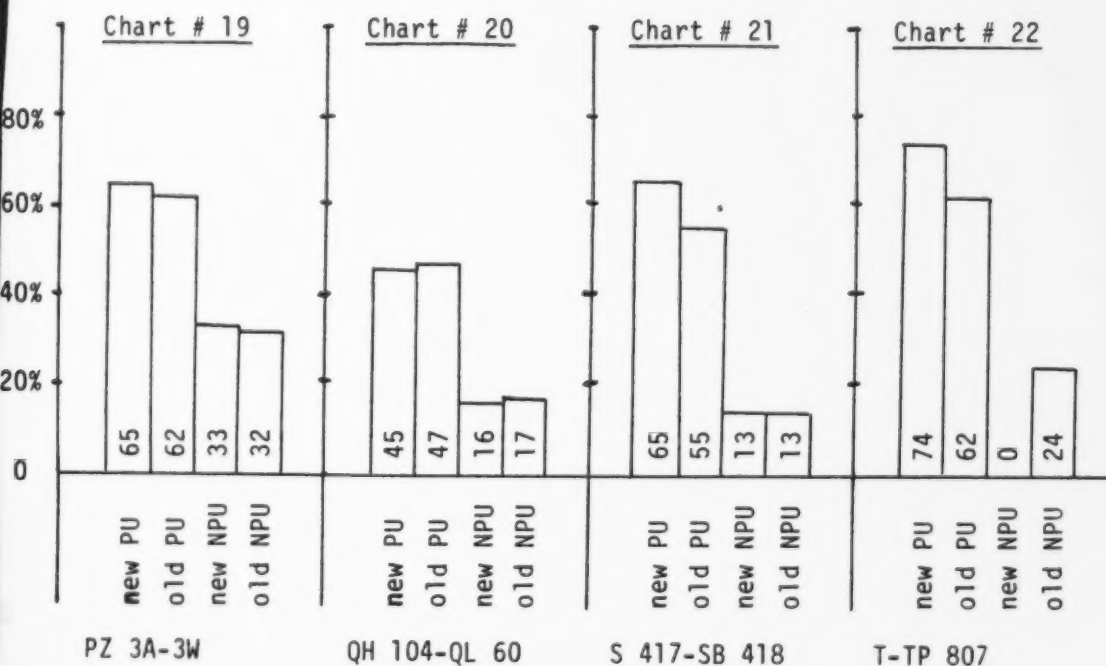
1976 and earlier acqs.



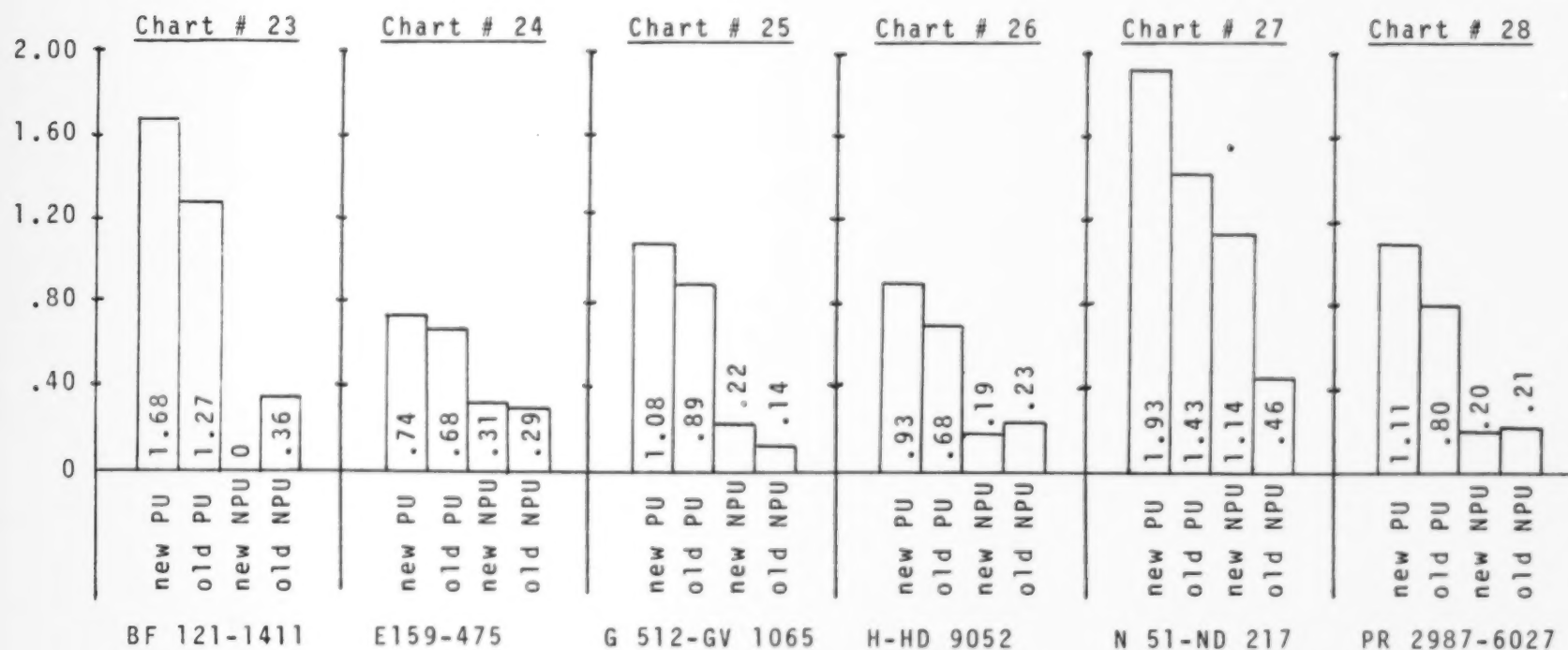
Percent used at least once in 1983, 1984, or first half of 1985 (2½ years).  
 PU = previously used. NPU = not previously used. New = 1977 or 1978 acquisitions.  
 Old = 1976 or earlier acquisitions. Figures at base of bars are percentages, e.g.,  
 74% of the new, previously used BF books were used again in the 2½ years of the study period.



Percent used at least once in 1983, 1984, or first half of 1985 (2½ years).  
 PU = previously used. NPU = not previously used. New = 1977 or 1978 acquisitions.  
 Old = 1976 or earlier acquisitions. Figures at base of bars are percentages, e.g.,  
 65% of the new, previously used PZ 3 books were used again in the 2½ years of the study period.



Average circulations per book in 1983, 1984, and first half of 1985.  
 "New" = 1977 and 1978 acquisitions. "Old" = 1976 and earlier acquisitions.  
 PU = previously used. NPU = not previously used. For example, the new and previously used BF books circulated in the 2½ years from 1983 to mid-1985 an average of 1.68 times each.



Average circulations per book in 1983, 1984, and first half of 1985. "New" = 1977 and 1978 acquisitions. "Old" = 1976 and earlier acquisitions. PU = previously used. NPU = not previously used. For example, the new and previously used PZ books circulated an average of 1.21 times in the 2½ years from 1983 to mid-1985.

